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Christman, Walter L.

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YOUR OPINION



Partnership 2.0: Toward a More Open Security Concept

Walter L. Christman: NATO's new Strategic Concept risks "pouring new wine into old wineskins" if it updates the concept of Partnership without reinvigorating the tools to accompany it. Several approaches developed together with the 1999 Strategic Concept should be revitalized for more global application.

Global challenges disregard borders, cross disciplines, and defy easy classification. The fact that they are interconnected and often amplified by technology are characteristic of this age of globalization. Emerging issues such as energy and resource security, piracy, transnational terrorism, and cyber security create problem spaces far broader than the response capabilities of any one nation or organization. Responding to these challenges will require approaches that are international, inter-organizational, and interdisciplinary in nature.

The 1999 NATO Strategic Concept enhanced the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a framework to prepare sovereign, nation-state partners to work with, and eventually join the NATO Alliance. The PfP was an effective means of bringing states in line with the goals of the Alliance; however, those goals as defined at the Washington Summit were focused on Euro-Atlantic integration issues. The PfP continues its activities today, and while this first iteration of a Partnership was effective in promoting partnership in a closed framework, the globalized challenges that have emerged today require that this framework be revisited and updated.

As NATO moves toward a new era of partnerships, an "open" security model is implied. A NATO "Partnership 2.0" approach should address globalized challenges through the cultivation of expanded partner capabilities in a much larger geographic area and in collaboration with other leading international organizations (e.g. UN, EU, and OSCE), building upon models of cooperation and institutions that were conceived within the framework of the 1999 Strategic Concept. While such a thrust would move in the direction of a more appropriate response to global challenges, it would remain limited, undefined, and centered around the idea of connecting nation states to a closed alliance unless new tools are created to accompany the new approach. It is only by reexamining and updating the fundamental tools of partnership that NATO can effectively prepare to work in a more "open" and participatory manner alongside international organizations, non-governmental organizations, military alliances, and a broader range of partner nations.

A new doctrine of Partnership supported by new tools is a vital necessity. One of the partnership tools that could be updated is the Partnership for Peace Simulation Network (PfP SimNet), which has historically been an important mechanism for the development of NATO collaboration with non-traditional security partners, such as NGOs. The Swedish-led Viking exercise, conducted as part of PfP SimNet, has been a leading event in the exploration of emerging issues affecting partner nations and should draw into its fold new players, such as China. Therefore, both PfP SimNet and the Viking exercise should be expanded as part of a revised NATO Partnership 2.0 approach by incorporating new partners, examining new problem spaces, and generating substantive analyses of globalized issues. Other tools established in the era of Partnership "1.0," such as the PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes and the network of PfP Education and Training Centres, should be re-examined and updated with respect to a more global outlook. Anything less risks "pouring new wine into old wineskins," with predictable and unfortunate results.

The process initiated by the NATO Secretary General to develop a new Strategic Concept is a symbolic exercise, considering that it reinforces the direction where the Alliance is headed already. However, let's not collaborate in the development of the NATO Strategic Concept in an open manner only to recreate a closed security policy. The emerging characteristics of an Open Security model imply a focus on being decentralized and non-hierarchical, process-oriented, and collaborative among a diverse set of actors. The Open Security model should be meritocratic and non-proprietary - meaning that policy is not "owned" by a single group, such as the North Atlantic Council (NAC), but instead is based on a more shared and collective ownership. The next Strategic Concept must move beyond collective defense and toward cooperative security, complementing the doctrine of deterrence with a doctrine of partnership - and the tools with which to implement it.

Walter L. Christman is an Associate Professor of Global Public Policy at the US Naval Postgraduate School.

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